

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
 100 WEST STREET  
 CAMBRIDGE, MA 02116



Town Hanson

Address High Street

Historic Name Hitchcock Parsonage

Use: Present Two-family

Original Single family

# DESCRIPTION

Date 1722

Source Town history

Style Early Georgian

Architect Not known

Exterior Wall Fabric Work shingle

Outbuildings Barn (1790, 1850)  
Shed (1920's)

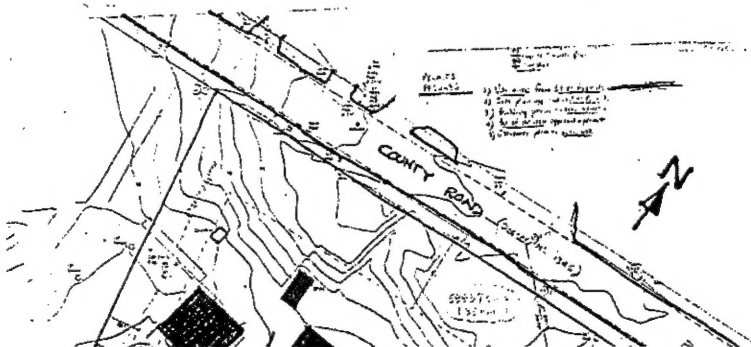
House increased in size c. 1780  
 Major Alterations (with dates) Kitchen Ell  
(early 1800's)  
Porch (1920's) Stair Tower (1970's)

Condition Excellent, though the house  
has undergone numerous alterations.

Moved No Date No

Acreage 1.38 acres

Map: Draw map showing property's location  
 relation to nearest cross streets and/or  
 topographical features. Indicate all buildings  
 on inventoried property and nearest  
 section(s).  
 Indicate north

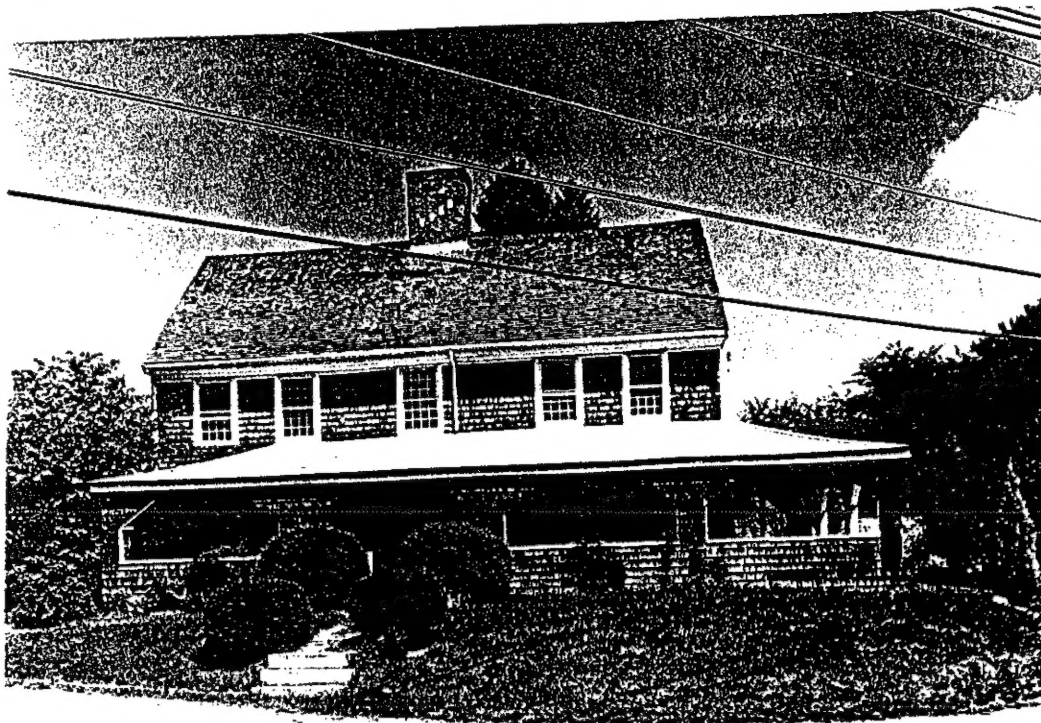


B - BUILDING

AREA

FORM NO.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
150 WILKINSON STREET  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02116



Street

Hitchcock Parsonage

Two-family

Single family

History

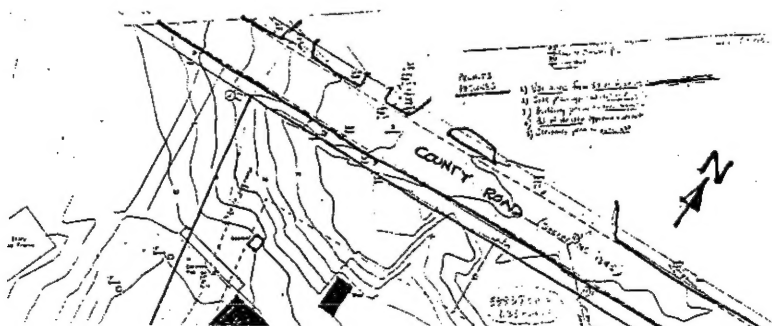
Georgian

Known

Work shingle

Outbuildings Barn (1790, 1850)  
Shed (1920's)

Nearest inventoried property and nearest  
intersection(s).  
Indicate north



House increased in size c. 1780  
Major Alterations (with dates) Kitchen Ell  
(early 1800's)  
Porch (1920's) Stair Tower (1970's)

Condition Excellent, though the house  
has undergone numerous alterations.

Moved No Date No

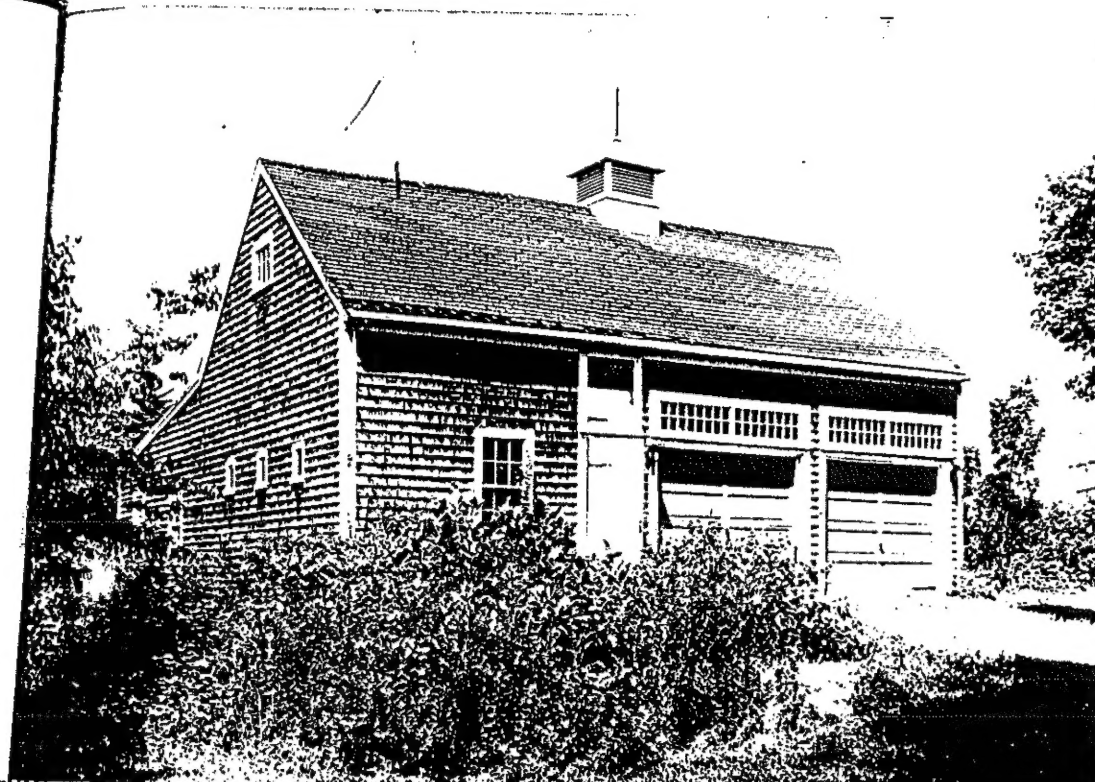
Acres 1.38 acres

**FORM B - BUILDING**

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
80 BOYLSTON STREET  
BOSTON, MA 02116

AREA

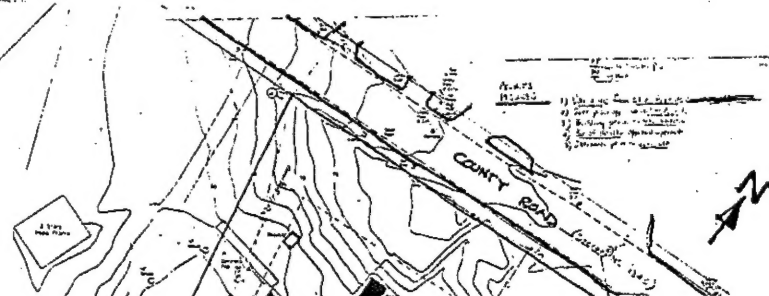
FORM



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between inventoried property and nearest  
intersection(s).  
Indicate north

Outbuildings Barn (1790, 1850)  
Shed (1920's)



House increased in size  
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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

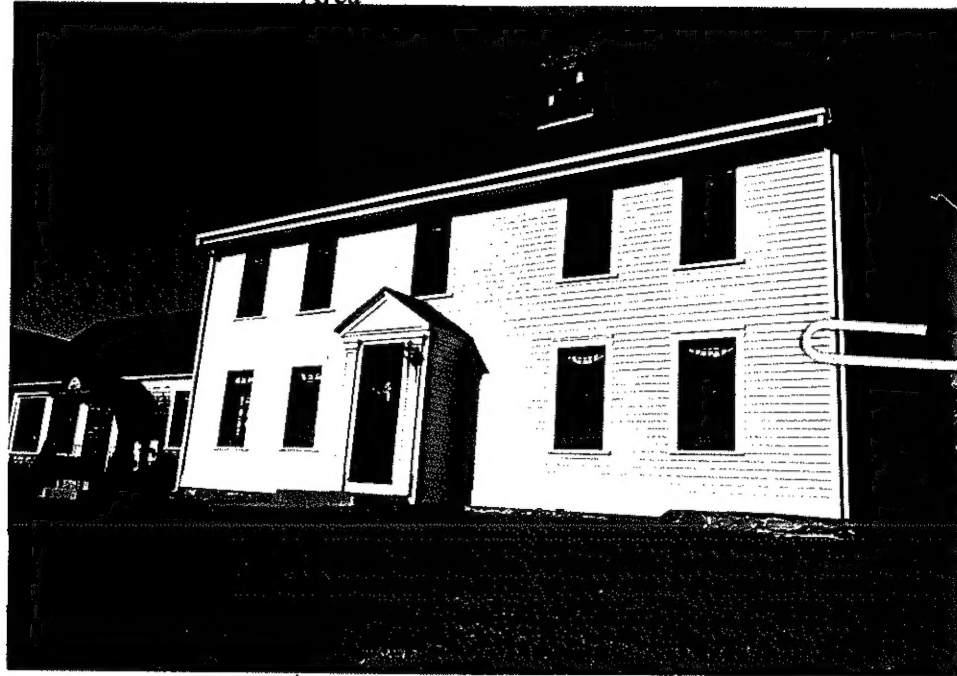
Community  
Hanson

Property Address  
909 High Street

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
Massachusetts Archives Building  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston MA 02125

Form # 13

Area



Community: Hanson <sup>lestr</sup>

MHC OPINION: ELIGIBILITY FOR NATIONAL REGISTER

Date Received: 3/29/89 Date Due: April 5 Date Reviewed:

Type: X Individual District (Attach map indicating boundaries)

Name: Hitchcock Parsonage Inventory Form: new form - see attached

Address: High Street

Requested by: Preservation Partnership

Action: Honor ITC Grant R & C Other:

Agency: FDIC Staff in charge of Review: DB

Photo's of overall complex will be sent - see DB

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

- ☒ Eligible  
☐ Eligible, also in district  
☐ Eligible only in district  
☐ Ineligible  
☐ More information needed

DISTRICTS

- ☐ Eligible  
☐ Ineligible  
☐ More information needed

CRITERIA:

A?

B

C

D

LEVEL:

Local

State

National

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE by

Lestra Hitchfield

The HITCHCOCK Parsonage was built for the first pastor in Hanson, GAD HITCHCOCK. The house was built in four stages:

- 1722 - (probably one room design)
- 1780 - expansion
- 1800 - Sitchen ell
- 1920s - front porch and rear glass porch

Barn also built in stages

1722 barned down



INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET	Community	Property Address
Massachusetts Historical Commission	Hanson	909 High Street
Massachusetts Archives Building		
220 Morrissey Boulevard	Area	Form #
Boston, MA 02125		13

### Architectural Description, continued.

909 High Street has been renovated since an inventory form for the property was submitted in 1989, and MHC staff recommended the property for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The large-scale, five-bay center chimney building is now used as a real estate office. The full-width one-story front porch that wrapped around the right-side elevation has been removed, as has the fire escape tower. A gabled entry porch is now centered on the clapboarded facade. The glass-enclosed porch on the rear elevation of the wing has been modernized. The side and rear elevations remain sheathed in shingles. A handicap ramp allows access to the centered rear entry. Canopies shield the rear entry and the entry on the wing. The shed located to the northwest of the house has been removed, replaced by an asphalt parking lot. The barn, now used as a bank, has been modified slightly on the exterior and has a one-story addition on its north elevation. The modifications include replacement of the garage doors with vertical sided panels, the enlargement of the window in the south gable end and the removal of the ventilator on the ridge pole.

### Historical Narrative, continued.

The Hitchcock Parsonage has had a series of long-term owners since its apparent construction in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. According to the town history the house is located on land developed originally by Isaac Thomas in the early eighteenth century. Thomas sold the property to Daniel Hayford in 1722, and the deed suggests the presence of a dwelling house at that time. The possibility exists that a portion of the dwelling is contained within the present surviving structure. Reverend Gad Hitchcock (1719-1803) acquired the developed property in 1749 from Daniel Hayford. Hitchcock was the first minister of the First Congregation Church, established as the West Parish of Pembroke in 1746 (see form no. 2 ). A native of Springfield and Harvard College graduate, Hitchcock served as pastor for nearly fifty years. The house remained in the Hitchcock family into the second half of the nineteenth century. Hitchcock's son, Dr. Gad Hitchcock (1749-1835) was the second family member to occupy the house. Dr. Hitchcock established his practice in Hanson following his graduation from Harvard College in 1768. Historic maps show that Calvin Tilden (1774-1832), also a physician, occupied the house by 1830. Tilden, a native of Marshfield, married Catherine Hitchcock, daughter of Dr. Hitchcock. Mrs. Tilden remained in the house following her

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
Massachusetts Archives Building  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Community  
**Hanson**

Property Address  
*909 High Street*

Area

Form #  
*13*

## National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form



Check all that apply:

☒ Individually eligible.

☐ Eligible only in a historic district.

☐ Contributing to a potential district.

☐ Potential historic district.

Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Statement of Significance by **Dempsey/Driemeyer**.

This property is significant as a well-preserved example of early building patterns in the town of Hanson, in a settlement configuration distinctive to the town and probably the region. Among the best examples of its type in town, it may be individually eligible but should be evaluated for its role in potential districts when its neighbors can be examined more carefully. The property meets criteria A and C at the local level and retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

## **NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)**

The Hitchcock Parsonage, with its very old section (c.1722) still retaining an exceptional corner cupboard and a high degree of integrity, appears unusual enough, even in Massachusetts, to be considered of state significance. It is, in fact, one of the best remaining examples of the kind of Early Georgian parsonage which, in the early years of the 18th century, was usually the best house in any small agrarian town.

## **ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.**

The Hitchcock Parsonage is an excellent example of a very early village parsonage (c.1722). Such houses were built to attract a good minister, and hence represented town pride in much the same way that town halls would in the 1830's to 1870's. This notwithstanding, physical evidence clearly indicates that the original parsonage was a one-room design typical of how other homesteads started, albeit with good Early Georgian trim and a very lovely corner cupboard more typical of Connecticut tradition. Unfortunately, the fireplace wall (west) of this earliest room was totally remodelled, and now has a 20th-century brick mantel, but the elegant window trim and built-in panelled seats appear to be original.

(See attached sheets for continuation of Architectural Significance)

## **HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.**

The Hitchcock Parsonage holds an important place in the local history of the town of Hanson, Massachusetts. Built in 1722, the house became the first permanent residence of Gad Hitchcock, the first pastor of the then new Precinct, when he purchased it in 1749. There exists clear records surrounding the history of Hitchcock's affiliation with Hanson. Most notably is a letter of counter offer which he wrote in 1748 to the town asking for more money before he would accept the post of town pastor. We can only assume that the offer was accepted because the following year he bought the house in town.

On the northern side of the house is located a small stone wall and well, which was known as the "Wayfarers Well." It is said that the well was a favorite stop for people traveling the dusty roads of the area.

For the last two centuries the Hitchcock Parsonage has been a principal component of the downtown scenery in Hanson. It is a shame that the house has deteriorated to the extent that it has, and it is clear that the house



## ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (cont'd.)

The house was greatly extended to full five-bay configuration still during the 18th century, and physical evidence would point to 1780-90 as a likely period for this expansion. Curiously, the rest of the house was built with a floor level some seven inches lower, clearly to provide more fashionable ceiling heights, while preserving the continuity of the roof line and exterior fenestration. This was made easier by the unusual proportions of the original window openings, which come down low over the window seats, thus making it possible for the windows of later rooms to line up and still have conventional sill heights.

Principal evidence for the date of the expansion comes from the main stair, whose details are stylistically late Georgian, while the panelled wall and the doors of the new parlor all still have the simple ovolo moldings which distinguish Georgian from Federal work. Similarly, doors either still have surface-mounted HL hinges (2nd period, without cusps), or bear their imprints, clearly visible in raking light. The new parlor also has a Federal mantel and closet door, whose elaborated ovolos betray it as a later addition to the wall. Clearly both these elements are superimposed on a wall of raised-field Georgian panelling whose careful composition and verticality again points to the last quarter of the 18th century.

The second parlor (c. 1780) was then remodelled during the early Federal Period (1800-1810) by the addition not only of its graceful mantel and adjacent closet (early Federal since the elaborated ovolos are still narrow and integral with the styles and rails), but also by the addition of a low, unpanelled dado and dado rail. Another major remodelling of the early 20th century left an appropriate if clearly Georgian Revival wall of shelves and cabinets against the outside front wall.

The keeping room and burning room were "restored" not too long ago with the usual selection of phony boards and "early American" finishes, leaving us with only a few original joists overhead. Even the large fireplace was "restored" beyond the possibility of accurate assessment.

The Federal kitchen ell is much overlaid with 1950's colonial revival of the Brosco persuasion, still marginally appropriate, but hiding the little evidence that remains of its origins. Knotty pine abounds. Behind this ell, however, is a glazed porch which is a commendable and interesting survival of this excessive 20th-century "Colonial" taste. It's matched boarding probably points to a 1920's origin.

## ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (cont'd. - 2)

The rear portion of the second floor, above the keeping room, was subdivided to provide 20th century closets and a kitchen, but -- unlike downstairs -- most of the original fabric is still there. The kitchen and closets are not contributing, in my opinion.

The one great note of discord is an incredibly shoddy fire stair tower to the north, which necessitated the moving of one window. This remnant of the house's recent two-family past is very distracting indeed, and should be removed.

The attic is a marvel of historic integrity, with a roof structure of major rafter-and-purlin design, presumably integrally built in c. 1780.

### THE BARN

At the rear of the house stands a barn, built in three sections. Two-thirds of the front of the barn are of old hewn-beam construction, while the remaining third is of sawn dimensional timber, without bracing, but with cut nails. The rear of the barn is a leanto of dimensional lumber, with a garage door and wire nails; most likely a 1920's garage. One end wall of the front barn (at the newer end) is brand new.

Our conclusion is that the earliest part of the barn is probably c. 1780, with its newer third being about a full century younger (c. 1880). The leanto appears to be of 1920 vintage, while one end wall of the main barn had to be recently rebuilt. We believe that the barn is significant in the context of the parsonage, and that every effort should be made to retain it on the lot.